

Baker: No Colson Cooperation

By Lawrence Meyer
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Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), the ranking member of the Senate select Watergate committee, denied yesterday that former White House special counsel Charles W. Colson has been cooperating with him in an investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In a response to a letter from Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii), another member of the select committee, Baker said that "Colson is not cooperating with me or the committee in the investigation." Baker said that he had talked to Colson "one time at my request to ask him to confirm or deny certain materials contained in other documents in the possession of the committee."

Although the committee staff has interviewed Colson, he invoked the Fifth Amendment last September when questioned under oath, reportedly explaining that he had been informed he was a target of a federal grand jury investigation. Colson was subsequently indicted by two U.S. juries in connection with the

Watergate cover-up and the Ellsberg break-in.

Inouye, in a March 21 letter, said that he was writing Baker "on the off chance that there is some validity" to columnist Jack Anderson's claim that Colson was cooperating with Baker in his investigation.

"If Mr. Colson has revoked his Fifth Amendment claims in order to provide you and the minority counsel with information relevant to the committee's inquiry," Inouye wrote, "I am confident that you will join me in recommending that the full committee hear Mr. Colson in executive session."

The Anderson column in question appeared in The Washington Post on March 13. It said Baker had been "dealing behind the scenes" with Colson and that Colson has "collaborated quietly with Baker's top committee aide, Fred Thompson, in the desperate attempt to shift more of the Watergate blame to the CIA."

Anderson's associate, Leslie Whitten, said yesterday, "We stick with that statement 100 per cent. Despite what Sen. Baker says, Thompson has,

just as we suggested in our column, quietly and on numerous occasions, been collaborating with Colson."

Colson said yesterday, "I have cooperated with all investigations — Mr. Jaworski's staff (special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski), with whom I've had many meetings, the FBI and members of the staff of the Ervin committee."

Thompson could not be reached for comment.

Baker said in his response to Inouye that he had given Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), chairman of the committee, a report on his inquiry into the CIA. Baker said he was giving copies of the report to Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.), chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and Sen. John C. Stennis, chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

In a related incident, Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.) chairman of the House Armed Services Intelligence Subcommittee, said yesterday that he had investigated the destruction of certain CIA papers belonging to Watergate conspirator James W. McCord shortly

after the Watergate break-in on June 17, 1972.

According to Nedzi, he first learned of the incident last Feb. 22 from the office of CIA Director William Colby, which told Nedzi that it had just discovered a memo about the destruction.

A subsequent investigation disclosed that a friend of McCord and his wife had gone to the McCords' home on June 21, 22 because he was concerned about Mr. McCord, Nedzi said.

The friend, identified as a former CIA informant named Lee Pennington, found Mrs. McCord burning papers, Nedzi said the Subcommittee was told. Mrs. McCord said she had received a bomb threat and was burning papers and clippings that her husband, whom she had seen in jail where he was being held at the time, told her were a "fire hazard."

According to Nedzi, Pennington said he picked up a file marked "CIA" and threw it into the fire. "Why it was burned," Nedzi said, "that wasn't satisfactorily explained."